

the

# SEED

newsletter

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6630 S. 40th Street • Phoenix, Arizona • 85042 • (602) 454-2606



## The Seed's Emergent Curriculum

### What Is an Emergent Curriculum?

An emergent curriculum is an organic approach to learning that incorporates the interests and passions of children, their teachers, and relevant issues or current events. It is used widely in early childhood settings, is well researched, and keeps learning alive, interesting, and meaningful. At the Seed, as in other schools, the emergent curriculum is aligned with the Early Learning Standards, NAEYC standards, and the Arizona Educational Standards.

### Why We Use an Emergent Curriculum

Awakening Seed uses an emergent curriculum model because we believe it offers children and teachers the most autonomy as learners.

Using an emergent curriculum keeps learning fresh, lively and directly connected to the group of students involved. It is local and tailored to meet the educational needs of a specific class. The emergent curriculum empowers learners to follow their passions. It enables the teachers and students to study topics that stimulate curiosity and wonder.

### Characteristics of an Emergent Curriculum

- Children and teachers construct meaning from self-selected topics
- Process is dynamic and explores knowledge through dialogue and active learning
- Inquiry-based curriculum shows learners how life is interconnected

- Subjects are integrated and infused with meaning that often exceeds what is normally expected of young children
- Motivates students to be life-long learners

### The Seed's Emergent Curriculum In Action

#### Toddler 1s

The Toddler 1s curriculum is centered on play, through which children explore their bodies, the environment, and learn to relate to their peers. Play is both child-directed and teacher-directed. During self-directed play, teachers ask open-ended questions and give language to children's actions and emotions. During teacher-directed activities, ideas are focused around small studies, generally motivated by literature with familiar or interesting themes. For example, after an enthusiastic reading of The Chocolate Chippo Hippo, the class followed up by making hippo masks and chocolate chip cookies. This eventually led to a more extensive study of zoo animals.

#### Toddler 2s

Last year the teacher noticed the Toddler 2s were curious about dinosaurs. The children talked about dinosaurs, played dinosaurs on the playground, chased each other around roaring, and most often picked the Jane Yolen How Do Dinosaurs... books during reading. Incorporating all the content areas, they studied seven specific dinosaurs, measured how tall a tyrannosaurs rex is and taped it on the floor. It was the exact length of 13 toddlers lying down head to feet. They built an erupting volcano with their reading buddies and practiced tracing dinosaur feet to develop

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fine motor skills. Various art and sensory activities were introduced to enhance learning, which culminated in a large dinosaur mural on display in the hallway.

### **Preschool 2.5/3s**

The 2.5/3s children have had some exciting dress-up sessions and expressed interest in firefighters, police officers and doctors. This energy is driving the class enthusiastically through a study of community helpers. Books, a variety of presenters, and a hat counting game are used to infuse the study with information and enthusiasm. Use of artistic skills to create a 3D community map made with recycled boxes and other objects, will contain a school, police station, fire station, library and hospital as the study evolves.

### **Preschool 3s**

A few years back, the 3s voted to study Mexico. Keeping in mind how to address state standards and at the same time maintain a child-centered curriculum, the class enthusiastically turned the room into a Mexican restaurant. Students practiced patterning by gluing squares of red, white and green for place mats. Art Masterpiece focused on Frieda Kahlo, through which we learned about some animals in Mexico. Outside, students made adobe bricks that baked in the sun while they constructed a farm scene which depicted the volcano that ultimately destroyed the lives of the Mexican people. Classes signed up to visit our restaurant. Children rotated roles as greeters or servers who served food and washed tables, as mariachi musicians and museum experts explained our study to the full patrons.

### **Preschool 4s**

Discovering common interests, meeting new people and sharing what we love are ways to foster a sense of community and kinship in the classroom. The preschooler's interest in each other and desire for self-expression has influenced our current study on family and self. The children's interest in drawing and creating figures inspired a set of self-portraits that reinforce basic writing concepts (HWT shapes), shape recognition, body awareness, spatial relationships (where do the arms go?), fine

motor skills (like tracing and cutting) and drawing principles. The assembly and creation of the figure is open-ended and encourages the children's understanding and exploration of who they are.

### **PreK**

Discussions about families, homes and helpful words filled the PreK classroom last year as students learned about their new room and each other. These beginning-of-the-year topics led to questions about people who do not have homes, and what communities do to help them. We read books and talked about philanthropy. Students created sets for and acted out Sam and the Lucky Money in order to better understand this concept. After a visit from Becky, a teacher at a Phoenix shelter, students collected their own toys to donate to her kids. We sorted and counted our items, and wrote in journals about Becky's visit. Throughout the study students compared and contrasted homes, discussed philanthropists they knew, and put philanthropy into practice with each other: noticing and participating in helpful actions at school.

### **Kindergarten**

The kindergartners examined earthworms from the classroom worm bin with squeals of enthusiasm and sheer enjoyment as the stringy creatures squirmed in their hands. Students wondered which end of the worm was the head and if they would bite. After some investigating with books and research on the Internet, we learned that worms have an anterior and a posterior but no eyes, ears, nose, or teeth. This led our class to composting leftover food scraps from lunches to feed our hungry worms. We read a funny picture book called Diary of a Worm and laughed at some of the jokes. Then we read a science book about earthworms to learn more about the worm's anatomy and discovered that they have 5 hearts. We also found out that the longest worm on record is 22 feet long. So, at math time we got out the rulers and measured real worms, then laid rulers end to end to see what 22 feet really looks like. We wonder where our next investigation will take us.

### **1st/2nd Grades**

Our class is learning about the aging process before we start our monthly visits to a local nursing home. Books such as Now One Foot Now The Other by Tomie dePaola gets us thinking more deeply about the elderly. As we study about the human skeleton, we learn how it can be affected by age. For example, you might get shorter because the padding between your vertebrae is less spongy. We learn about strokes, arthritis, and Alzheimer's by listening to a nursing home training video. Discussions of the project inspired interest in writing stories and letters to the children's own grandparents.

### **3rd/4th Grades**

Last year the 3rd/4th graders did a study of the fifty states, and made a giant scale map in the hallway. At the same time, we were reading Walk Two Moons by Sharon Creech, in which the main character takes a car trip across much of the country. The students had the idea to track the character's progress on our map in the hallway as we read, and even to research several landmarks mentioned in the book. In this way, we were able to visit Yellowstone and Mount Rushmore right along with the character in the book.

## october birthdays

Elan Hart  
Emma Stout  
Nathan Hancock  
Ingrid Veres  
Marko Svoren  
Annika Weber

Leah Stahl  
Rohan Advani  
Chloe Zorensky  
Reese Chamberlain  
Drew Kolber

### **QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

Lexi Bella Krymow, age 4, picked a sunflower out of her bread from her sandwich and said, "Hey! I found a seed. I'm going to plant this in the garden and grow myself another sandwich."